

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 7, 2019

The Honorable David Pekoske
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration
601 South 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598-6001

Dear Administrator Pekoske:

I am concerned about the effects of the ongoing government shutdown on the employees and operations of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

On Friday, *CNN* reported that hundreds of TSA officers from at least four major airports called out from work last week.¹ As you are aware, TSA officers are required to work without pay during the shutdown. Despite providing essential government services, TSA officers are among the lowest paid Federal employees, with many living paycheck-to-paycheck. Officers may not be able to pay for rent, child care, and other necessities if their paychecks do not arrive on time.

The fact that the overwhelming majority of officers have reported for duty without fail in the face of such challenges is a testament to their dedication to service. Still, it is only reasonable to expect officer call outs and resignations to increase the longer the shutdown lasts, since no employee can be expected to work indefinitely without pay.

I appreciate TSA's statement that "security effectiveness will not be compromised and performance standards will not change" due to staffing shortages.² However, I am concerned if wait times and public pressure increase, some TSA managers may try to manage the effects of the shutdown in ways that are detrimental to security. The security of aviation passengers must always be paramount.

Therefore, please provide answers in writing to the following questions as soon as possible:

1. Has TSA provided guidance or resources to assist employees during a lapse in pay? If so, please provide a copy.

¹ Marsh, Rene, and Gregory Wallace, "First on CNN: Hundreds of TSA screeners, working without pay, calling out sick at major airports," *CNN*, 4 Jan. 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/04/politics/shutdown-tsa-screening/index.html>.

² Thrush, Glenn, "T.S.A. Screeners, Working Without Pay, Are Calling Out Sick," *The New York Times*, 4 Jan. 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/04/us/politics/tsa-government-shutdown-sick-leave.html>.

2. How many TSA officers have called out each day of the shutdown?
3. How is TSA ensuring adequate staffing despite the call outs?
4. Has TSA made any changes to security policies, procedures, or operations during the shutdown? Please explain.
5. Does TSA have a contingency plan to address mass call outs or resignations among its workforce? If so, please provide a copy of the plan.
6. Has such a plan been communicated to field management? If so, provide a copy of such communications.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Alison Northrop, Oversight Director, at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives